



## Marijuana Regulation and Teen Use Rates

**Following the enactment of both medical cannabis access laws and adult use marijuana laws, there has not been any significant rise in self-reported marijuana use by adolescents.**

"Data from the 1991-2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a biennial school-based survey representative of US high school students, were analyzed. ... Overall results show that rates of lifetime cannabis use rose from 1991, peaked in 1999 (47.3 percent), and subsequently decreased, with 30.1 percent of adolescents reporting ever using cannabis in 2023. ... Similarly, while over one-quarter of US adolescents reported recent cannabis use in 1999, by 2023 less than one-fifth did. Overall early-age cannabis use also similarly decreased."

[Trends in US adolescent cannabis use, 1991-2023, Addictive Behaviors, 2026](#)

"This paper compares risk profiles for cannabis use among large samples of youth in the school years preceding (2017–18, T1) and four years following (2021–22, T2) cannabis legalization in Canada. ... This study provides evidence that, in a relatively short 4-year period spanning the cannabis pre-legalization to post-legalization time periods, adolescent cannabis use has declined."

[Using decision trees to examine risk profiles for cannabis use among large samples of underage youth before and after cannabis legalization in Canada, Addictive Behaviors Reports, 2025](#)

"The results of this study show declining trends in marijuana use among US high school adolescents from 2011 to 2021. The decline in marijuana use within this population is part of a broader trend in decreasing substance use during the same period. The significant decreases observed in both the 'ever used marijuana' and 'currently use marijuana' categories highlight a promising reduction in adolescent marijuana use, with usage dropping to approximately 70% of the levels recorded in 2011. Similarly, the percentage of adolescents who tried marijuana before age 13 decreased to about 60% of the 2011 levels."

[Trends in marijuana use among adolescents in the United States, Pediatric Reports, 2024](#)

"To guide prevention and use reduction strategies, Public Health – Seattle & King County described recent trends in cannabis use by sex among King County, Washington students in grades 8, 10, and 12 and examined trends in sex-based differences. Data collected during seven 2008–2021 survey periods by the Healthy Youth Survey (administered by the Washington State Department of Health) and restricted to King County students in grades 8, 10, and 12 were analyzed. ... The observed overall decreases in cannabis use among students in grades 8, 10, and 12 might be associated with changes in the availability of cannabis among persons aged  $\geq 21$  years as well as limited opportunities to engage in use. The period 2012–2014 includes the legalization of nonmedical cannabis in Washington in 2012. Researchers studying the association of cannabis laws with cannabis use among high school students (grades 9–12) have observed similar declines in cannabis use after legalization of nonmedical cannabis. The legalization of nonmedical cannabis for adults aged  $\geq 21$  years in Washington with licensed dispensaries requiring proof of age might have affected availability of cannabis to younger persons as well as their opportunities to engage in its use. This, in turn, might have had an impact on use prevalence."

[Cannabis use among students in grades 8, 10, and 12 by sex – King County, Washington, 2008-2021, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2024](#)



## **Perceived availability of marijuana among young people is falling nationwide**

"Between 2002 and 2015, we observed a 27% overall reduction in the relative proportion of adolescents ages 12-17- and a 42 percent reduction among those ages 12-14-reporting that it would be "very easy" to obtain marijuana. This pattern was uniformly observed among youth in all sociodemographic subgroups. ... Despite the legalization of recreational and medical marijuana in some states, our findings suggest that ... perceptions that marijuana would be very easy to obtain are on the decline among American youth."

[Trends in perceived access to marijuana among adolescents in the United States: 2002-2015, Journal of Studies of Alcohol and Drugs, 2017](#)

## **Rates of problematic cannabis use by young people has declined for the better part of the past two decades.**

[Adolescent treatment admissions for marijuana following recreational legalization in Colorado and Washington, Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 2020](#) | [Declining Prevalence of Marijuana Use Disorders Among Adolescents in the United States, 2002 to 2013, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2016](#) | See also: [Recent Trends in the Prevalence of Marijuana Use and Associated Disorders in the United States, JAMA Psychiatry, 2016](#)

## **The enactment of medical cannabis laws is not associated with any causal upticks in youth marijuana use**

"Based on current evidence, we largely concur with the conclusions of other reviews. Results for adolescents under age 18 are highly consistent in showing negative or insignificant effects of MCL (medical cannabis law) enactment on the prevalence of use. ... The relatively few studies that considered the specific provisions of MCLs, such as allowances for dispensaries, have also found little evidence that such provisions matter for adolescent use outcomes."

[Early evidence of the impact of cannabis legalization on cannabis use, cannabis use disorder, and the use of other substances: Findings from state policy evaluations, The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, 2019](#)

## **The passage of adult use cannabis laws is not associated with any causal upticks in youth marijuana use in those jurisdictions that have enacted them**

"Objectives: To examine the association between enactment of state RCLs [recreational cannabis laws] and changes in cannabis outcomes by race and ethnicity overall and by age groups in the US. ... No changes were observed in any of the cannabis outcomes among participants aged 12 to 20 years of any racial or ethnic group."

[Racial and ethnic differences in cannabis use following legalization in US states with medical cannabis laws, JAMA Open Network, 2021](#)

"Using data from the YRBS [Youth Risk Behavior Survey] for the period 1993-2019, this study provides updated estimates of the association between legalization and adolescent marijuana use. ... Consistent with estimates from prior studies, there was little evidence that RMLs [recreational marijuana laws] or MMLs [medical marijuana laws] encourage youth marijuana use."

[Association of marijuana legalization with marijuana use among US high school students, 1993-2019, JAMA Open Network, 2021](#)